

# **Missouri's Justice Reinvestment Initiative and Violent Crime Reduction**



**November 2019**

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**Background.** In May 2017, Missouri state leaders requested technical assistance from The Council of State Governments Justice Center (CSG Justice Center) with support from The Pew Charitable Trusts (Pew) and the U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) to use a data-driven Justice Reinvestment approach.

On June 28, 2017, Executive Order 17-17 was issued, and established the bipartisan Missouri State Justice Reinvestment Task Force to study the state's criminal justice system. This task force realized the need for Missouri to collaborate across agencies, apply best practice research in corrections from other states, and identify other opportunities to implement evidence-based practices in the state's corrections and criminal justice system. The 21-member task force, which included representation from the Governor's office, state executive branch departments, state lawmakers, members of the judiciary, corrections officials, prosecuting and defense attorneys, law enforcement representatives, former offenders, and behavioral health practitioners met five times between July and December 2017 to review analyses and to discuss policy options. Through this comprehensive data analysis, the Missouri State Justice Reinvestment Task Force identified the following primary challenges contributing to criminal justice trends in Missouri:

- **Increases in violent crime.** Missouri's violent crime rate increased 13% between 2010 and 2016, with the steepest increase (20%) occurring between the years of 2013 and 2016. During this same time period, arrests by law enforcement for reported incidents of violent crime decreased dramatically. Further, many law enforcement agencies were found to lack the capacity to collect, analyze, and use data to inform deterrence, prevention, or interdiction strategies to address violent crime, underscoring the need for reform.
- **Insufficient behavioral health treatment.** The majority of people admitted to prison in Missouri or starting terms of community supervision in FY 2016 were assessed as needing treatment for substance addictions or mental illnesses. Additionally, a lack of available community-based behavioral health treatment created two interrelated problems for individuals involved with the criminal justice system who also have behavioral health needs: (1) individuals supervised in the community had few, if any, quality treatment options that were easily or moderately accessible, and (2) because of this lack of access to treatment in the community, more individuals were sentenced to institutional treatment at state prisons who could have been safely supervised in the community. These related problems had persistently high human and fiscal costs for Missouri for the decade spanning 2006 to 2016.
- **Rising prison admissions.** Missouri's incarceration rates have increased substantially since 2010. At the beginning of the Justice Reinvestment process Missouri's incarceration rate was the eighth highest in the nation and had increased four percent since 2010 while the national incarceration rate declined eight percent.
- **High recidivism.** More than half of people admitted to Missouri state prisons in FY 2016 were admitted due to revocations from probation or parole supervision. Of these revocation returns, more than half were admitted due to a technical violation of the conditions of supervision. Changes are needed to better assess, treat, and supervise people on probation and on parole while still holding them accountable.

Upon conclusion of the Justice Reinvestment Phase I data review process, the Missouri State Justice Reinvestment Task Force voted unanimously to endorse a number of policy initiatives aimed at addressing identified challenges. The final framework for the changes to Missouri's criminal justice system was translated into House Bill (HB) 1355 (2018) which was signed into law on June 1, 2018. HB 1355 enacted changes to supervision practices, risk and needs assessment, community behavioral health treatment and services, and crime victim compensation, as well as creating a state fund to assist law enforcement to address violent crime.

Like much of the country, Missouri's criminal justice system is highly decentralized making local law enforcement and its community partners vital to the successful implementation of criminal justice policy initiatives. Recognizing this dynamic, HB 1355 created the Missouri Law Enforcement Assistance Program (MOLEAP), an initiative intended to meet the needs of local law enforcement and enable them to address violent crime in their region through evidence-based practices. When law enforcement use evidence-based practices to address the unique nature of violent crime in their jurisdictions, the cascading social and financial costs can be alleviated. Diverting individuals to a community-based intervention will help to improve public safety and reduce unnecessary justice system involvement.

After MOLEAP was passed into law, state leaders at the Missouri Department of Public Safety (DPS), as well as their counterparts on the Justice Reinvestment Initiative Executive Oversight Committee, sought input from law enforcement across the state to identify the challenges and barriers to addressing violent crime and to discover viable strategies Missouri law enforcement are utilizing. Input from law enforcement was obtained in three ways: (1) a State Public Safety Forum held in December 2018, (2) a statewide survey of law enforcement leadership disseminated in June 2019, and (3) a series of seven regional focus groups with law enforcement leadership held in July and August 2019. This engagement with Missouri law enforcement was designed to gather information to support law enforcement to build analytical capacity, upgrade data collection systems, and enhance community policing efforts.

**Survey and Focus Group Methodology.** In June 2019, DPS worked with the CSG Justice Center and representatives from the Missouri Police Chiefs' Association and the Missouri Sheriffs' Association to design an outreach strategy to reach as many law enforcement leaders as possible through an electronic survey and a series of seven regional focus groups.

The survey asked law enforcement leaders across the state about the challenges, barriers, and resources that either hinder or help efforts to implement evidence-based practices to reduce violent crime. The eighteen-question Missouri Law Enforcement Survey was sent electronically to 652 law enforcement agencies statewide, including police chiefs, sheriffs, state police command staff, college/university police, airport, railroad, and transit police. The survey asked law enforcement leaders at those agencies to identify barriers to the implementation of evidence-based, data-driven violent crime reduction efforts and how the state can help address those barriers and challenges and support law enforcement in their efforts to address violent crime. An interactive dashboard of the survey's results can be found at [this link](#).

To offer law enforcement another venue to provide insight into barriers and challenges to addressing violent crime, DPS partnered with a nationally renowned law enforcement expert to conduct seven regional focus groups across the state. Law enforcement leaders were invited by DPS with the assistance from the Missouri Police Chiefs' Association and Missouri Sheriffs' Association to attend the focus group location closest to their jurisdiction or main office location. Focus groups were held in the following locations: Poplar Bluff (southeast), St. Louis (east), Kirksville (northeast), Jefferson City (central), Springfield (southwest), Kansas City (west), and St. Joseph (northwest). Sheriffs, police chiefs, state and



federal law enforcement, and supervisors from across the state participated in the focus groups and provided regional context to the results of the law enforcement survey. DPS staff attended the focus groups to take notes and catalog responses to the questions posed.

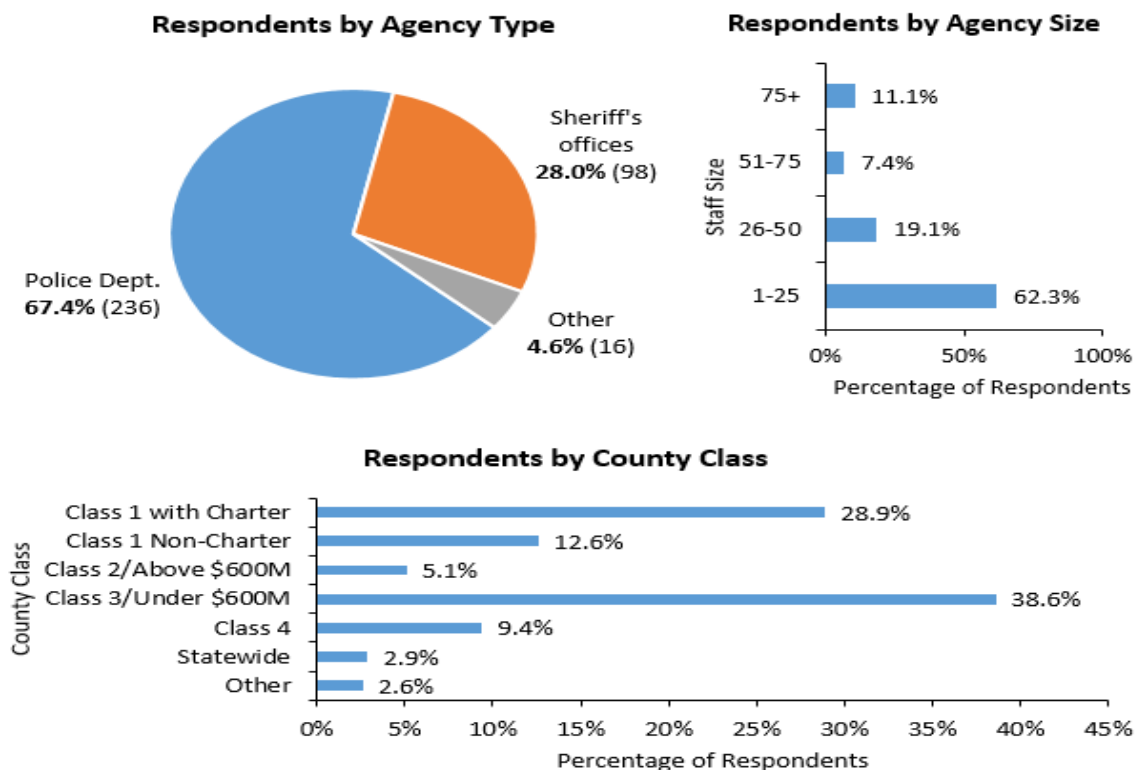
The law enforcement survey and focus groups posed questions designed to examine three themes present in the feedback from law enforcement at the State Forum on Public Safety in December 2018:

- (1) Challenges facing law enforcement to reducing violent crime;
- (2) Resources needed to reduce the impact of identified challenges; and
- (3) Promising existing programs or practices that have a positive impact on reducing violent crime.

This report combines findings from both the survey and the focus groups to examine each of these three themes.

Figure 1: Survey Respondent Demographics (n=350)

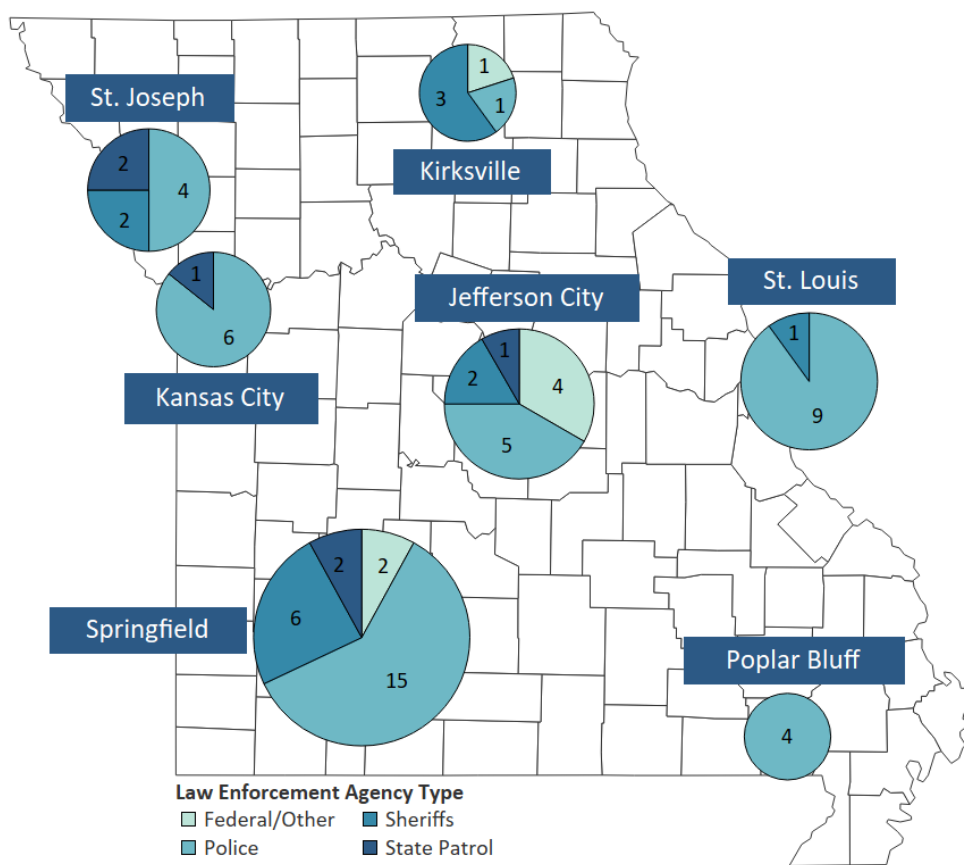
**Survey Participants.** The law enforcement survey was sent electronically to 652 law enforcement leaders statewide. Overall, 350 individuals participated in the survey for a 54% response rate. Over two-thirds of participants represented police department leadership (67.4%) and the overwhelming majority (81.4%) of all participants were law enforcement leaders that employ fifty staff members or fewer. One-third of participants reported operating a jail (33%), and of those leaders who operate jails, three-quarters (74%) operated jails with fewer than 25 people on staff. County classification was used to determine if participants represented both a geographic and economic diversity of Missouri counties.



The plurality (41.5%) of participants reported being in Class 1 counties with or without county charters (the counties with the highest populations in Missouri). Class 3 counties with assessed valuations of less than \$600 million were the next most common response (38.6% of participants); however, there was representation from each class of Missouri county as well as from statewide and other types of law enforcement agencies. (See Appendix A for County Classifications in the State of Missouri, 2019).

**Focus Group Participants.** A total of 71 law enforcement leaders participated in the focus group discussions for an average of approximately 10 participants per focus group. Like the participants responding to the survey, most focus group participants were leaders of police departments (62%). Sheriffs' department leaders represented 20% of focus group participants, state patrol leaders and federal or other types of law enforcement agencies comprised the remaining 18% of participants. The Springfield focus group location featured two sessions to accommodate the number of interested law enforcement leaders. In total, 25 law enforcement leaders from the Springfield area participated across two focus groups, the largest regional turnout.

Figure 2: Focus group participants by region and type of law enforcement



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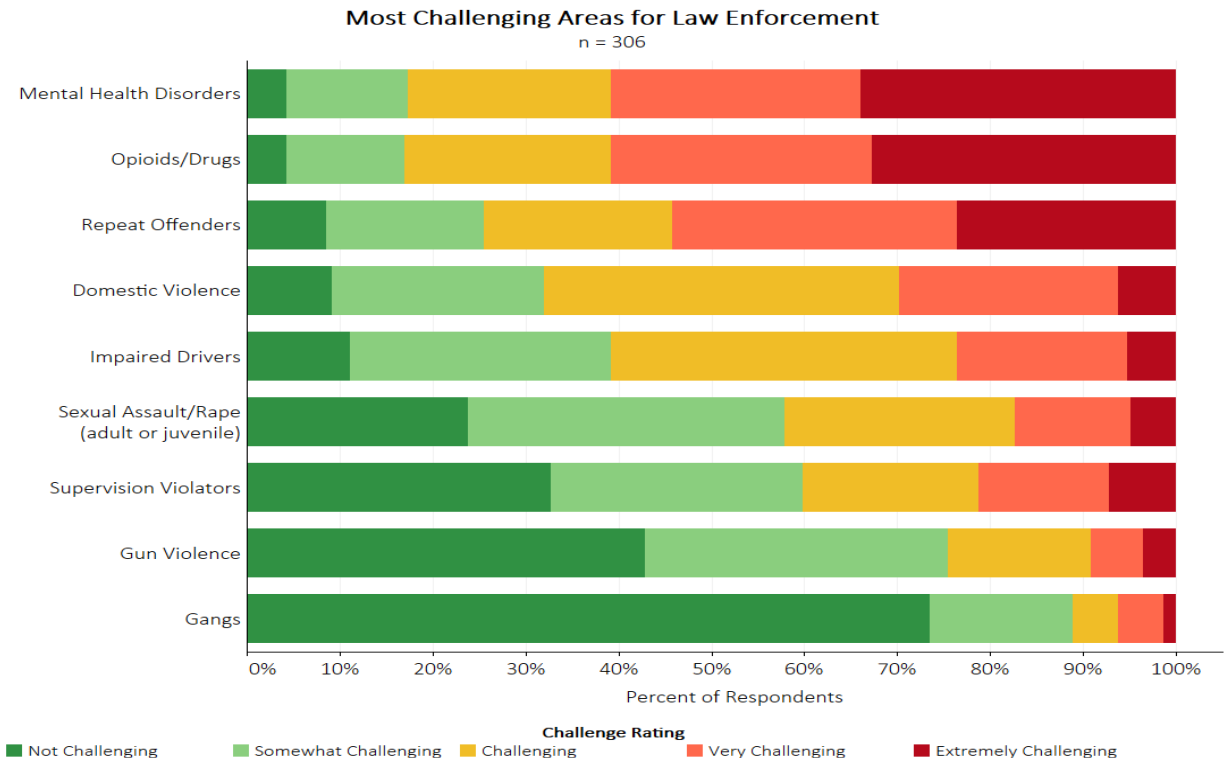
## Law Enforcement Assessment Findings

At the outset of this project, Missouri leadership sought robust information about the challenges facing law enforcement in addressing violent crime and responding to people in crisis. While there was some variation in responses between types of law enforcement agencies, as well as agencies with and without a jail, there was an enormous degree of consensus among participants regarding the three themes explored: (1) challenges facing law enforcement, (2) resources needed to address those challenges, and (3) promising existing practices for the challenges articulated. The section below presents findings for each of these themes by analyzing the survey and focus group responses in conjunction.

### Theme 1: Challenges facing law enforcement

This theme explored the question at the heart of the law enforcement engagement project: what issues are most challenging for law enforcement generally and specifically for reducing violent crime? The survey asked law enforcement to rate the challenge of nine issue areas identified as challenges at Missouri's Public Safety Forum in December 2018.

Figure 3 (below) displays how challenging law enforcement leaders found each of the nine issue areas. Opioids/drug use (60.8%), mental health disorders (60.8%), and repeat offenders (54.2%) were the top three issues considered “very” or “extremely” challenging by respondents. While police departments and sheriffs’ offices responded similarly regarding the intensity of many challenges, one key difference was that 75.5% of jail-operating respondents cited mental health disorders as “very” or “extremely” challenging compared to only 53.2% of non-jail-operating respondents. This dynamic is important, but unsurprising as agencies operating a jail remain in contact with individuals suffering mental health issues far longer than those that do not.



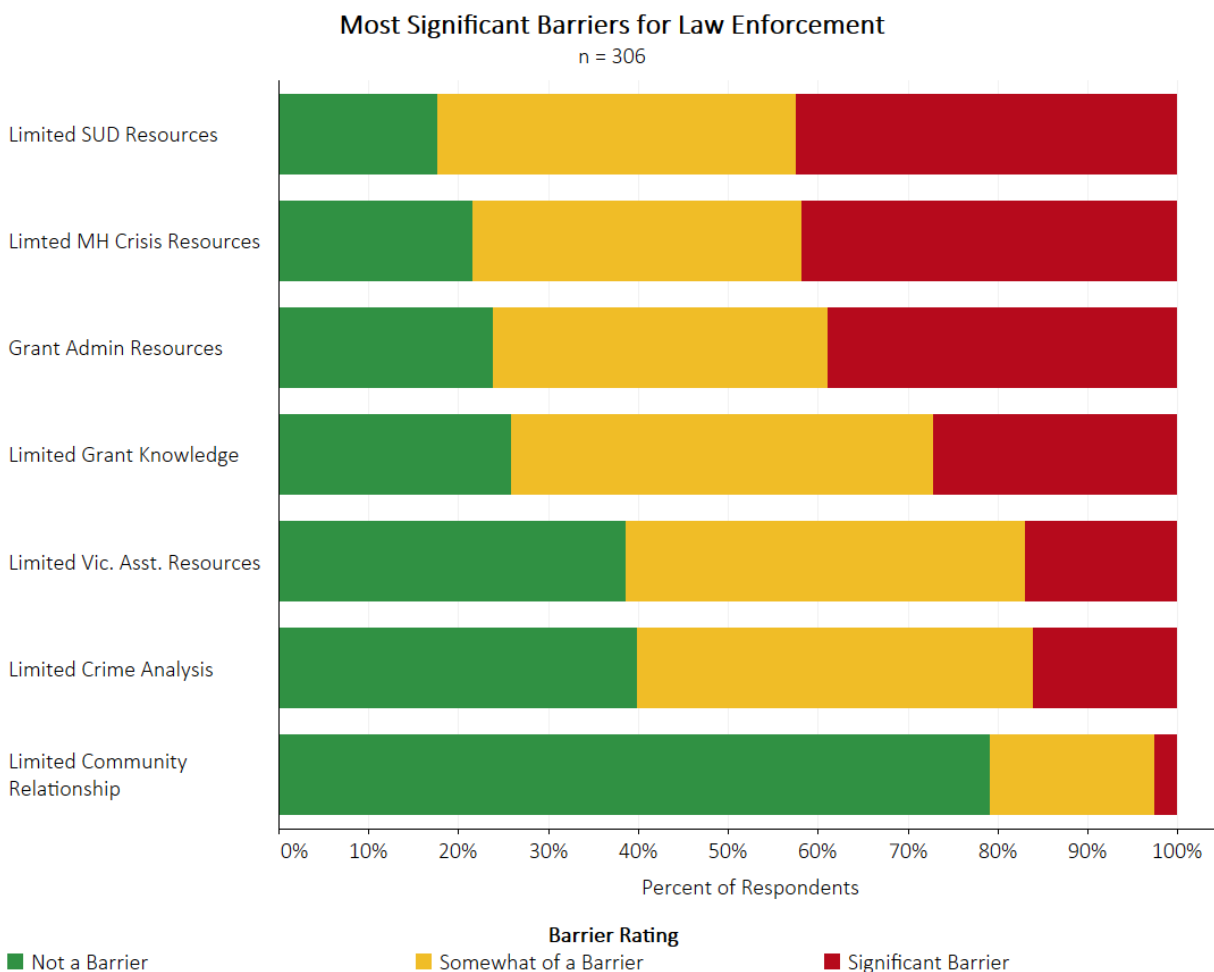
**Focus Group Question 1.** The first question posed to the focus groups was, “what are the top three challenges to reducing violent crime in your region?” Focus group discussions sought to add regional context to the survey’s statewide findings. Figure 4 (below) details the top three challenges each region identified, and as is evident in the responses, common themes emerged across all seven regions. The most frequently cited challenge to reducing violent crime was a lack of community-based resources for individuals with mental health and substance use disorders, a lack of victim and/or witness cooperation with investigations and cases, followed by a lack of prosecution for violent crime cases.

QUESTION 1	RANK	LOCATION							
		POPLAR BLUFF	ST. LOUIS	KIRKSVILLE	JEFFERSON CITY	SPRINGFIELD 1	SPRINGFIELD 2	KANSAS CITY	ST. JOSEPH
What are the top 3 challenges to reducing violent crime in your region?	1	Lack of victim-witness cooperation	Opioid trafficking	Lack of mental health treatment	Responding to individuals with mental health issues	Narcotics driving violent crime	State out of touch with local issues	Lack of prosecution	No accountability for actions of offenders
	2	Lack of resources to address domestic issues	Concerns with open carry law and lack of prosecution for gun crimes	Lack of victim services	Lack of victim-witness cooperation	Lack of mental health and substance use treatment	Lack of connection between funding opportunities and local need	Gun violence	Poor DOC policy decisions/ youth lack of care or respect humanity (tie)
	3	Youth perspective accepting of violence	Lack of victim-witness cooperation/ insufficient prosecution (tie)	Delays in crime lab results; crime lab processing priorities	Personnel shortage and high staff turnover/the need for better communication with the public (tie)	Ferguson effect	Responding to individuals with mental health issues/slow judicial process/more gun crimes (3-way tie)	Individuals with mental health and substance use issues	Personnel shortage and high staff turnover/ Offenders with mental illness in jail (tie)

**Lack of community-based resources for individuals with mental health and/or substance use disorders**

Law enforcement leaders identified this area in both the survey and the focus groups as a significant challenge to effectively addressing and reducing violent crime in their regions. As discussed above, over 60% of survey respondents identified mental health and substance use a “very” or “extremely” challenging. A lack of resources for these areas compounds the issue as respondents identified a lack of resources for substance use disorders (42.5%) and mental health crisis response (41.8%) as significant barriers. Figure 5 (next page) details the rankings for resource barriers facing law enforcement.

Figure 5: Resource barriers to law enforcement, survey result



Survey respondents who operate jails were even more likely to report mental health and substance use as significant barriers at 59% and 58%, respectively. In the context of a challenge in effectively addressing and reducing violent crime, focus group participants discussed the complicated nature of responding to the needs of individuals experiencing mental health and/or substance use disorder crises instead of focusing their attention on those committing violent crimes.

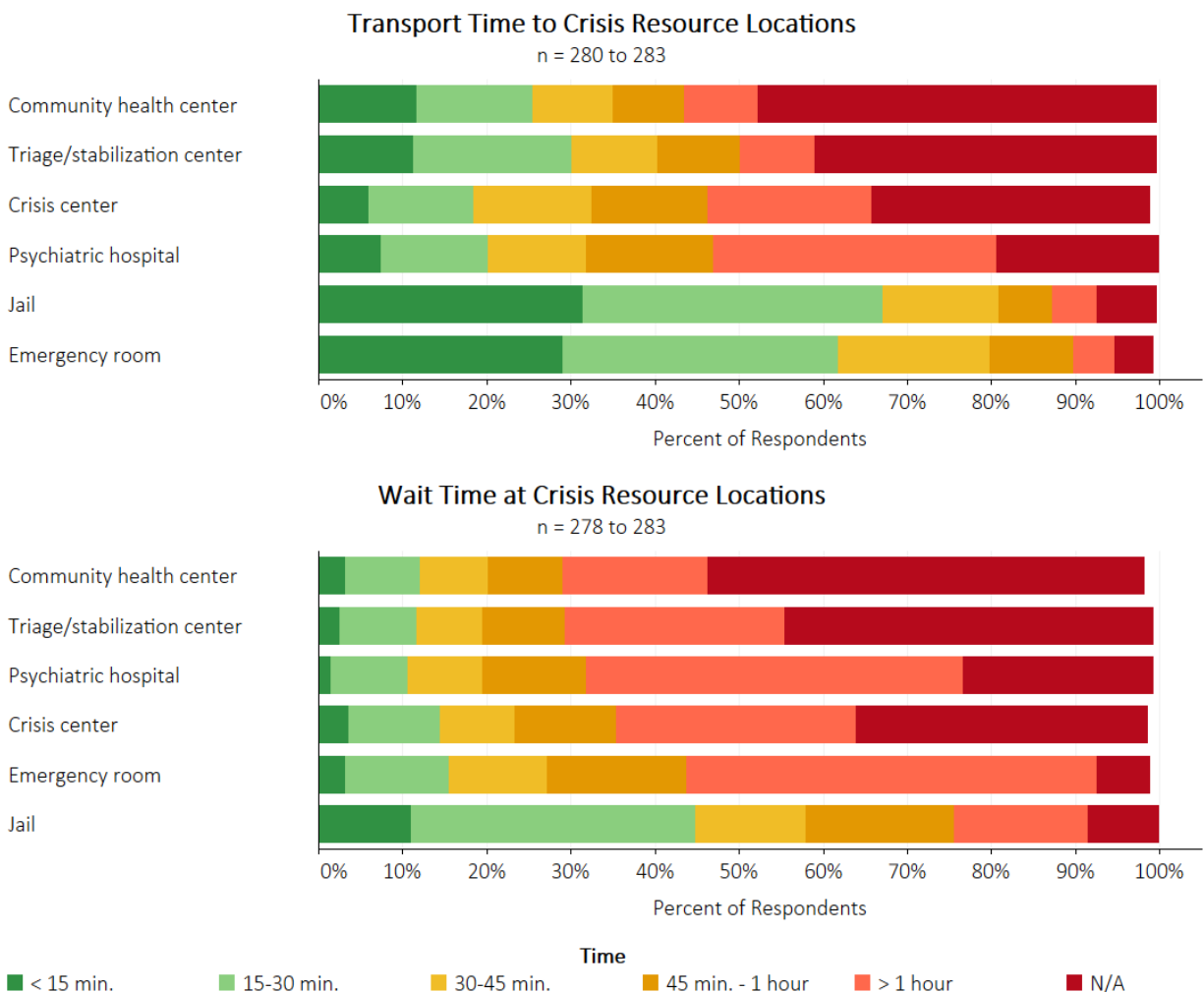
A Springfield group participant stated “Many individuals are self-medicating. Most people in jail have a mental health disorder but there are no mental health facilities to take them to.” Another focus group participant said “mental health [disorders] contribute to addiction; [there is a] failure of the system; hospitals are not taking them.” A Kansas City group participant stated “CIT is great, but mental health resources don’t exist.” Further, in St. Joseph participants called attention to the limited resources available, stating: “[There are] not enough beds” and that “there is a ten-month wait...so we have a warehousing system for mental health.” In all focus groups, there was a consensus that substance use disorders coexist with mental health disorders thereby exacerbating an individual’s behavioral health needs. It was stated several times that drugs were drivers of violent crime. “We are flooded with meth [amphetamine]. There’s been an increase in robberies, shootings, and officers are taking a lot more guns off of people,” said a Springfield focus group participant. Lastly, a Jefferson City participant stated “We



see domestic-related aggravated assaults concentrated in poverty areas with mental health and substance use disorders.”

Discussion revealed differing attitudes toward mental health treatment facilities depending upon whether they were present in or near a community. For agencies without these facilities, officers are often required to drive those needing mental health treatment significant distances, exacerbating staffing shortages. A Kirksville focus group participant stated “There are no lockable [treatment] facilities in the region, so officers must drive to other far-away facilities which is very disruptive to staffing.” In addition to long drive times to and from hospitals, officers must present an application for detention evaluation and wait for patient admission which can take several hours, preoccupying the officers even longer. Jails and emergency rooms are *significantly* closer than any type of crisis facilities and emergency rooms have wait times comparable to dedicated crisis facilities, likely making jails the default destination for many agencies handling individuals in crisis.

Figure 6: Transport times, survey result



Communities with hospitals that receive civil psychiatric commitments expressed frustration with patients sent into their communities only to be released shortly thereafter, requiring further police attention. Since these patients are often brought from a distance and lack the means to return, they become homeless, creating a vulnerable population for that community. According to the Missouri Hospital Association 2019 Rural and Psychiatric Hospital Report, 30 rural counties lack a hospital and six rural counties are without a single primary care physician countywide. There are less than 3,000 psychiatric beds available in Missouri's hospitals.

These challenges stated by law enforcement leaders underscore the complicated challenge that mental health and substance use disorders pose to their agencies. As one Poplar Bluff participant described the situation, "All the agencies are passing the buck – to other counties, other jails, other hospitals, other agencies – no one has the capability to deal with individuals who have a mental health disorder."

### **Lack of cooperation from victims and/or witnesses.**

In every focus group except Kirksville, the lack of cooperation from victims and witnesses of violent crime was identified as a significant challenge. Without the cooperation of victims and witnesses, bringing the perpetrators of violent crime to justice becomes significantly more difficult, if not impossible. This makes the fact that every focus group except Kirksville<sup>1</sup> identified the lack of cooperation from victims and witnesses of violent crime as a significant challenge an especially pressing issue. The prevalence of this challenge appears to have three drivers: long investigation and prosecution times, a shortage or lack of victim advocate services, and community mistrust of the criminal justice system.

While long investigations may have many causes, including resource shortages and the lack of victim/witness cooperation itself, a contributing factor is a delay in forensic DNA testing, especially for sexual assault cases. Multiple focus group participants discussed long wait times for DNA testing with a Springfield participant stating that it takes "6-8 months to get DNA or blood back which has hurt us in our court cases" and that the "state lab is understaffed." Another participant in St. Joseph said it "takes two years to get DNA results back." These reported delays are supported statistics from the Missouri State Highway Patrol's Crime Lab.

According to the lab, DNA casework backlog increased 58% from 2017 to present and the average turnaround time for DNA results increased 13%. Changes from HB 1355 and recent opioid and drug related issues have greatly increased demand for lab services, outstripping existing resources. While the MSHP was successful in securing permission from the legislature to spend \$2.9 million in surplus funds from the DNA databasing program in FY 2019 and in FY 2020 will receive five full-time employees to expand DNA operations, it will take at least two years for these enhancements to begin impacting testing times.

Once an investigation has been completed, slow or even declined prosecutions increase the public's frustrations with the criminal justice system. A Kansas City focus group participant stated that "prosecutor issues like caseloads contribute to state felonies that don't get filed. Extreme caseloads mean that we must have a confession that evidence needs to be in line – which is very frustrating to

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<sup>1</sup> The Kirksville focus group expressed that victim/witness cooperation was a problem, but not a new one. Participants viewed it as a perennial challenge of law enforcement rather than a new or worsened challenge.

officers – they get burned out after 4-5 years. It is also frustrating to victims who complain to law enforcement but there is nothing we can do.”

A shortage, and sometimes complete lack of, victim advocate services compounds the impact of long delays from the time of a crime to the imprisonment of the perpetrator on victim and witness cooperation. According to Missouri Office of Prosecution Services, 94 out of 114 counties in Missouri have at least one prosecutor-based victim advocate for the judicial circuit and many of those advocates provide support to multiple counties. Some prosecutor-based victim advocates are utilized at a higher level than others. The underutilization of these victim advocates may be due to non-existent standards to define the roles and responsibilities of these advocates. There are disparities among the level of effort afforded to law enforcement in utilizing prosecutor-based victim advocates. From October 1, 2018 - September 30, 2019, 64,313 individuals received some kind of victim service from prosecutor-based advocates (MAPA Annual Report, October 2019). However, according to the Missouri Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence there were nearly 31,000 unmet requests for domestic violence shelters and services in 2018 (MCADSV Domestic and Sexual Violence Statistics 2018). While MCADSV represents community-based advocates rather than prosecutor-based advocates, this statistic reveals the shortage of victim resources in Missouri. With little or no support to navigate what can be a complicated system, law enforcement leaders sympathized with the perspective of victims who are reluctant to come forward.

Law enforcement leaders commented in many of the focus groups about the challenge of working in communities that are distrustful of police. Participants cited the national discourse around distrust of police, negative police action, and police-involved shootings as contributing to this distrust. A Springfield participant stated “social media is a real challenge. Officers are attacked by social media and it gives a platform. Ferguson has driven social media.” A sentiment expressed in more than one focus group was for the “need to engage the community to take back their neighborhoods; community policing is about shared responsibility.”

Recent research quantifies the impact of high profile incidents between law enforcement and minority communities on public safety. The MSHP and the University of Missouri’s 2016 Missouri Crime Victimization Survey asked several questions related to perceptions of law enforcement. While 70% of white respondents reported confidence in law enforcement, only 50% of black respondents felt the same. This disparity in confidence is made worse by the fact that 25% of black respondents reported no confidence (not just neutrality) in law enforcement compared to only 12% of white respondents.<sup>2</sup>

This lack of confidence in law enforcement has real implications for public safety. A 2016 Harvard University study examined calls for service in Milwaukee before and after a high profile 2004 incident in which both on- and off-duty police officers assaulted Frank Jude, a black man. The study controlled for historical patterns and several neighborhood dynamics and found that calls for service from black neighborhoods dramatically declined for over a year following the publicizing of the incident, resulting in an estimated 22,000 less calls for service. This decline in calls for service may have contributed to the fact that the six months following the publicizing of the incident were the deadliest months included in the seven-year study with homicides increasing 32% relative to both previous and subsequent years.<sup>3</sup> If high profile incidents such as this can seriously affect calls for service in which members of the public

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<sup>2</sup> (Missouri State Highway Patrol, University of Missouri, 2016)

<sup>3</sup> (Desmond, Kirk, & Papachristos, 2016)

urgently need assistance, they almost certainly decrease victims' and witnesses' willingness to cooperate with years-long investigations and prosecutions without assistance from victim advocates.

Without the cooperation of the community, victims, and witnesses, law enforcement leaders are hard-pressed to hold perpetrators accountable for violent crime.

### **Lack of prosecution**

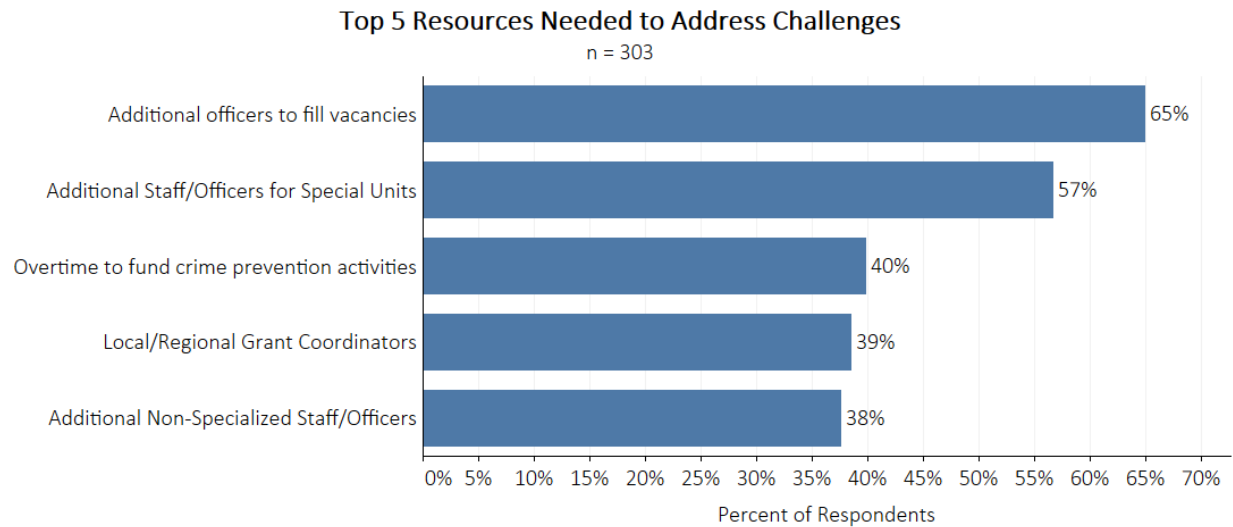
Across all seven regional focus group areas participants emphasized that the challenge of the lack of prosecution of gun violence cases and the prevalence of guns affects the reduction of violent crime. Law enforcement leaders expressed concern and frustration with Missouri's "lax" (a term used in multiple, different focus groups) gun laws, particularly the ability to carry a firearm openly. Participants in all focus groups believe Missouri prosecutors are not utilizing existing gun laws to charge repeat and violent offenders. In addition, participants voiced concerns with citizen ability to carry a firearm openly. In Southeast Missouri, law enforcement reported frequent calls for service related to individuals openly carrying firearms. In the St. Louis group, law enforcement leaders reported a massive spike in firearm thefts from vehicles. One participant said "the issue isn't necessarily lax gun laws but irresponsible ownership; leaving guns in unlocked cars is asking for it to be stolen." One Springfield participant said, "It is a free-for-all. The accessibility to firearms contributes to violent crime...aggravated assaults are increasing and are all related to guns." A colleague at that same Springfield focus group agreed stating, "We've gone back to the Wild West where everyone has a gun. If you leave a gun unattended in a car with the car unlocked you should be punished."

Taken together, lack of victim and/or witness cooperation with investigations and prosecutions, lack of prosecution of violent crime cases, and lack of community-based resources for individuals with mental health and/or substance use issues presented the most significant challenges to law enforcement leaders statewide, and while other challenges were discussed, there was agreement statewide these challenges were most pressing.

### **Theme 2: Resources needed to reduce the impact of identified challenges.**

In both the survey and the focus groups and across all demographic categories studied (type of law enforcement agency, county classification, jail operation, and staff size) there was uniform agreement across Missouri's law enforcement leaders about the resources needed to effectively address violent crime and the current challenges described above and they are overwhelming related to budgets and staffing. Operationally, recruitment of qualified staff was considered a significant barrier by 54% of respondents followed by specialized staff training at 40%. With staffing identified as the most significant barrier, it followed that the resources needed to address this barrier were additional staff in both sworn and non-sworn capacities. Here again, participants unanimously identified these five types of needed resources across all demographic categories. Figure 7 (next page) outlines survey responses provided for what resources are needed to address or remove those barriers.

Figure 7: Top resource needs, survey results.



**Focus Group Question 2.** The second question focus group participants were posed was, “what are the top three types of resources needed in your region to address challenges to reducing violent crime?” As with the survey results, focus group participants unanimously cited staffing concerns, most notably the hiring and retaining of quality and qualified staff in both sworn and non-sworn capacities, as one of the top three types of resources needed in all of the seven regions (see Figure 8 next page). Participants contextualized the challenge staffing issues present as a barrier to effectively addressing violent crime in two main ways: (1) crisis-level understaffing due to difficulty hiring and retaining quality and qualified staff, and (2) quality training for new and existing staff.



Figure 8: Top resources needs to address challenges to reducing violent crime, focus group results

QUESTION 2	RANK	LOCATION							
		POPLAR BLUFF	ST. LOUIS	KIRKSVILLE	JEFFERSON CITY	SPRINGFIELD 1	SPRINGFIELD 2	KANSAS CITY	ST. JOSEPH
What are the top 3 types of resources needed in your region to address challenges to reducing violent crime?	1	Funding (lack of tax base in some counties)	Hiring and retaining qualified and quality staff	Treatment providers and availability of bed space	Funding to initiate and operate programs	Mental health and substance use treatment resources	Hiring and retaining qualified and quality staff	Mental health and substance use treatment resources	Funding to hire and retain qualified and quality staff
	2	Diversity in staffing	Funding	County jail re-imbursement	Greater engagement with youth	Grants to hire non-sworn staff	County jail re-imbursement	Prosecutorial focus on repeat offenders	Detox treatment center
	3	Improved training	More public-private partnerships to increase social service availability/homelessness resources (tie)	Hiring and retaining qualified and quality staff	Hiring and retaining qualified staff	Drop-in treatment centers	Grants to address locally relevant law enforcement needs	Hiring and retaining qualified and quality staff	Affordable mental health and substance use treatment resources

### **Crisis-level understaffing**

A lack of staffing and difficulty recruiting and retaining quality and qualified candidates was discussed extensively in every focus group. There was a common perception among participants that understaffing can be traced to a few different, but interrelated employment patterns in Missouri: (1) changing public attitudes toward law enforcement, (2) low pay for dangerous work, and (3) competition across multiple job sectors for quality employees. Participants were quick to point out that these issues are not new to law enforcement, but that in recent years the problem seems to have worsened. Suggestions were made that a national campaign to improve the public perception of policing as a career is needed and that there is disappointment that more is not being done at the state level to do the same in Missouri.

A St. Louis participant described the problem of understaffing in the following way, “It is difficult to maintain a qualified, experienced, veteran workforce. We have difficulty recruiting and then cannot maintain officers after 3-5 years. We are 135 officers short in [our department] and the employment climate makes it tough to recruit good candidates. At this point, our hiring can’t keep up with attrition. We will have to cut services soon.”

This urban perspective was juxtaposed by a perspective from Southeast Missouri and a more rural department: “Small cities lack the necessary funding to attract more officers with better compensation. We can’t find quality staff for \$30,000 a year.” There was some discussion at multiple focus groups about the transience of the workforce as being part of a “Millennial” approach to employment where people stay for a few years and then move on instead of being more career-oriented and this was supported by patterns of individuals moving from jurisdiction to jurisdiction due to the extreme competition for quality staff.

Understaffing concerns were not limited to sworn staff, but also to non-sworn staff. A Kirksville participant described the concern voiced at multiple focus groups of unfunded state mandates that departments have difficulty complying with due to lack of dedicated program coordination staff as well as limited ability to apply for and then manage grant opportunities due to the same. The participant said, “We need greater access to competent, experienced grant writers. It could be a regional approach. Grant money ends up going to the state or to larger agencies and more needs to go to locals or to regions. We can’t compete but desperately need the funding.” Frustrations with the grant-writing and approval process were expressed in all the focus group meetings. Officials felt applications were judged more on the quality of the application (i.e. how aesthetically pleasing and well-written it is), rather than the actual merits of the request. Additionally, the time commitment involved in writing grant applications places a strain on understaffed departments. Often, law enforcement officials have difficulty determining what funding opportunities are actually available to them. A Southwest participant stated “Law enforcement are being forced to do more with less.”

Focus group discussions around staffing also prioritized a need to improve and standardize law enforcement training across the state. Issues were raised regarding the quality of training law enforcement leaders perceived as lower than an acceptable level as well as the cost of training which was perceived as too high and even cost-prohibitive for many potential attendees. A Poplar Bluff participant stated the following about training, “rural officers need more training, but the urban departments get all of the attention because they have more people. The cost of the training academy often means limited minority participation and without better funding sources to assist with academy costs we end up lowering standards for quality of candidates to be admitted.” Participants suggested that training be centralized at the state level to ensure a consistent level of quality as well as remove the fiscal burden from localities to train officers.

### **Mental Health and Substance Use Disorders Resources**

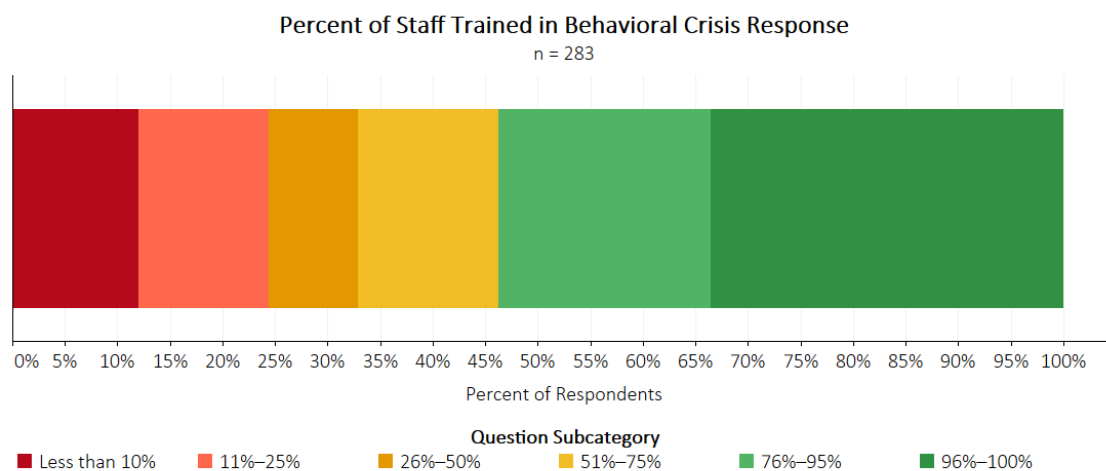
During focus group discussions, law enforcement leaders expressed the desire to have more community mental health liaisons (CMHLs) or some type of behavioral health professional embedded or connected to the law enforcement agency (to include jails). Those agencies with a strong relationship with their jurisdictional CMHL could not express enough how they rely upon the CMHLs for assistance. According to the Missouri Coalition for Community Behavioral Healthcare, Missouri has 31 CMHLs covering the state of Missouri and most CMHL’s serve multiple counties. In 2018, there were over 13,000 referrals made to CMHLs from law enforcement and courts; 78% of the referrals had a primary mental health disorder history and 43% had a primary substance use disorder history. According to law enforcement leaders in the focus groups, there were many times a CMHL referral was not made due to the CMHL being on calls in other jurisdictions. A Poplar Bluff participant stated “CMHLs have always shown up when needed; they haven’t impacted hospital treatment protocols though.” A St. Louis participant echoed this by stating “CMHLs and Substance Use Disorder Liaisons (SUDLs) are helpful but their impact is limited without a facility to place patients.” A statement made by a Jefferson City group participant sums up the sentiment of needing community resources “mental health and substance use are not solely law enforcement problems.”

In order to meet the challenge law enforcement face with responding to individuals in crisis, several Missouri agencies are seeking help from the behavioral health system to enhance their response efforts. Along with more CMHLs throughout the state, focus group participants expressed the need for the following resources: behavioral health services in all jails, establishment of “sobering centers” or crisis response stabilization centers, additional inpatient bed space, behavioral health co-responders with law

enforcement, mobile intervention strategies, additional outpatient behavioral healthcare providers and a requirement of all hospitals to hire staff to manage patients with mental health disorders.

In order to understand the ability for law enforcement to address mental health and substance use crisis, the survey asked participants about the percentage of current staff that have received training in responding to people in crisis and the type of training received. It is impressive to note that on average, no matter the county classification, approximately one-third of law enforcement agencies report having nearly their entire staff (96-100% of staff members) having received some type of crisis response training.

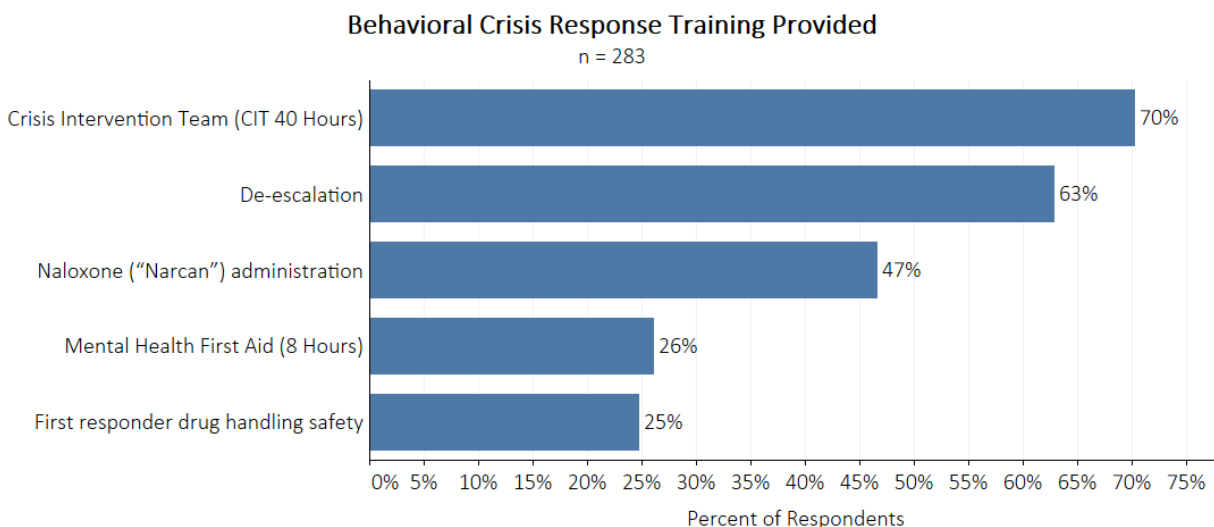
Figure 9: Percentage of staff trained in behavioral crisis response, survey results



As figure 10 (next page) demonstrates, the majority (70%) of participants have staff who are trained in Crisis Intervention Team (CIT). Over half (63%) of participants reported training staff in de-escalation techniques, a third (47%) of participants train staff in naloxone administration, a fifth (26%) of participants train staff in mental health first aid, and a fifth (25%) train staff in first responder drug handling safety. Participants could indicate more than one type of training for staff in this question.

This is impressive and reflects a dedication of Missouri law enforcement to train staff appropriately in order to address a pressing law enforcement and resource challenge.

Figure 10: Percentage of staff trained in Behavioral Crisis Response, Top 5 survey results

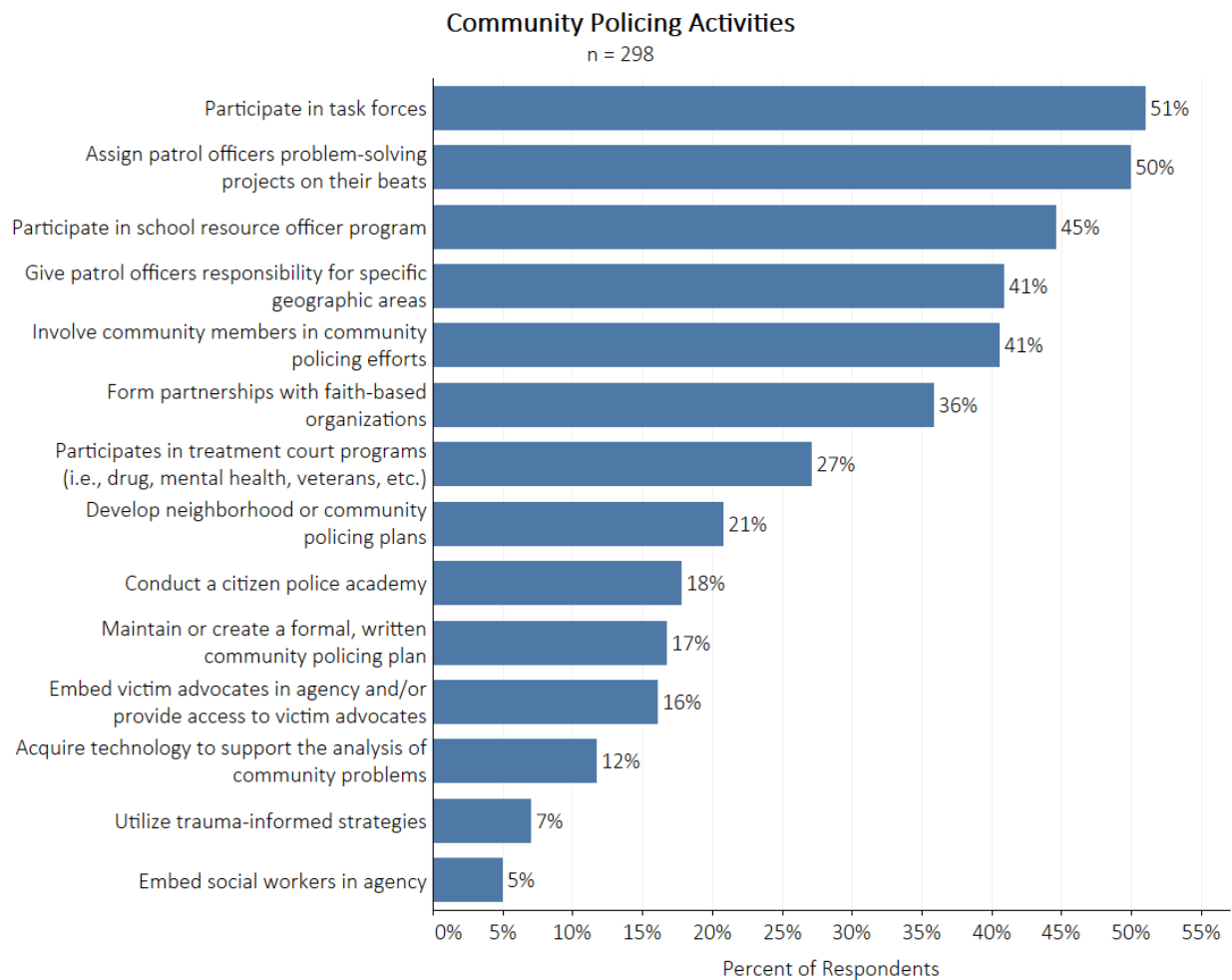


### **Theme 3: Promising Existing Practices.**

Missouri state leaders want to strengthen and replicate the excellent and innovative programs and practices law enforcement leaders and their staff across the state are already engaged in. The law enforcement survey and focus groups provided a statewide avenue to gather information about what Missourians are doing that is working so that strategies to support those initiatives can be discussed and shared with others around the state. The law enforcement survey asked law enforcement leaders to identify evidence-based practices they employ in three areas: (1) community policing, (2) violence-reduction, and (3) responding to individuals in mental health or substance use crises. The focus group discussion in this area then gave participants the opportunity to identify the top three promising practices used in their regions to address both of these interrelated challenge areas.

**Community Policing.** Survey participants were asked to indicate what types of community policing efforts they currently engage in within their regions. Figure 11 (next page) details the types of community policing activities law enforcement are participating in around the state.

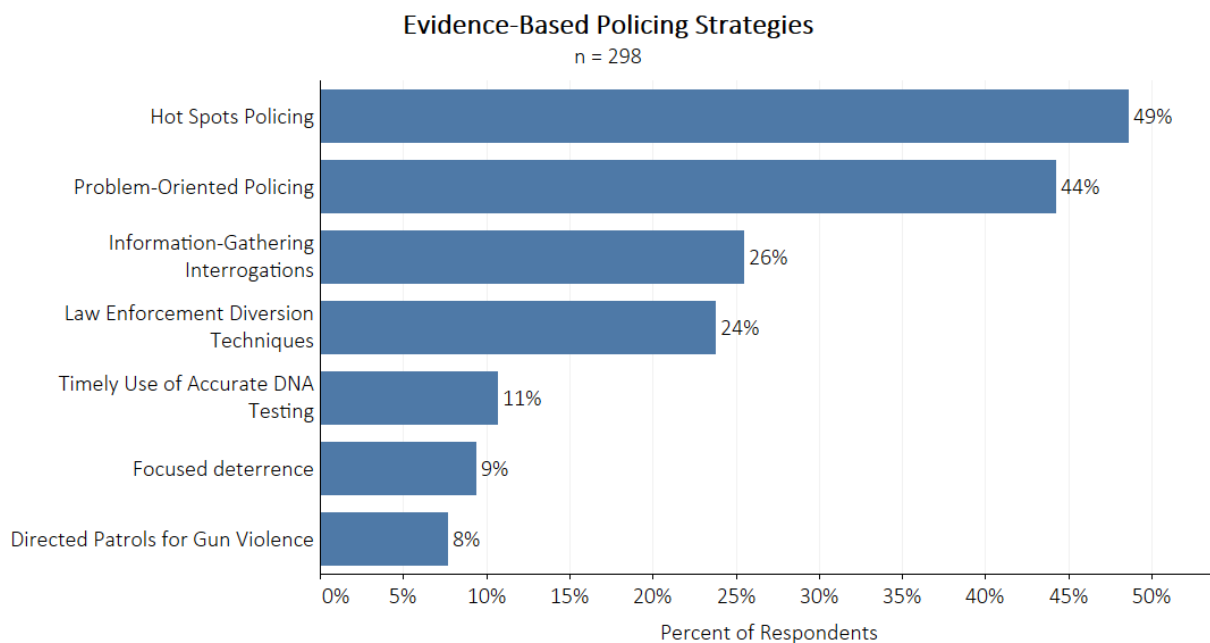
Figure 11: Community policing activities by type of law enforcement, survey results



A list of evidence-based violence reduction practices (see Appendix B) were provided to participants in the survey and they were asked what kind of evidence-based policing strategies to address violent crime they employ (Figure 12 next page). Of the seven evidence-based violence reduction practices, up to half of survey participants of each type of law enforcement agency reported engaging hot spots policing and problem-oriented policing.

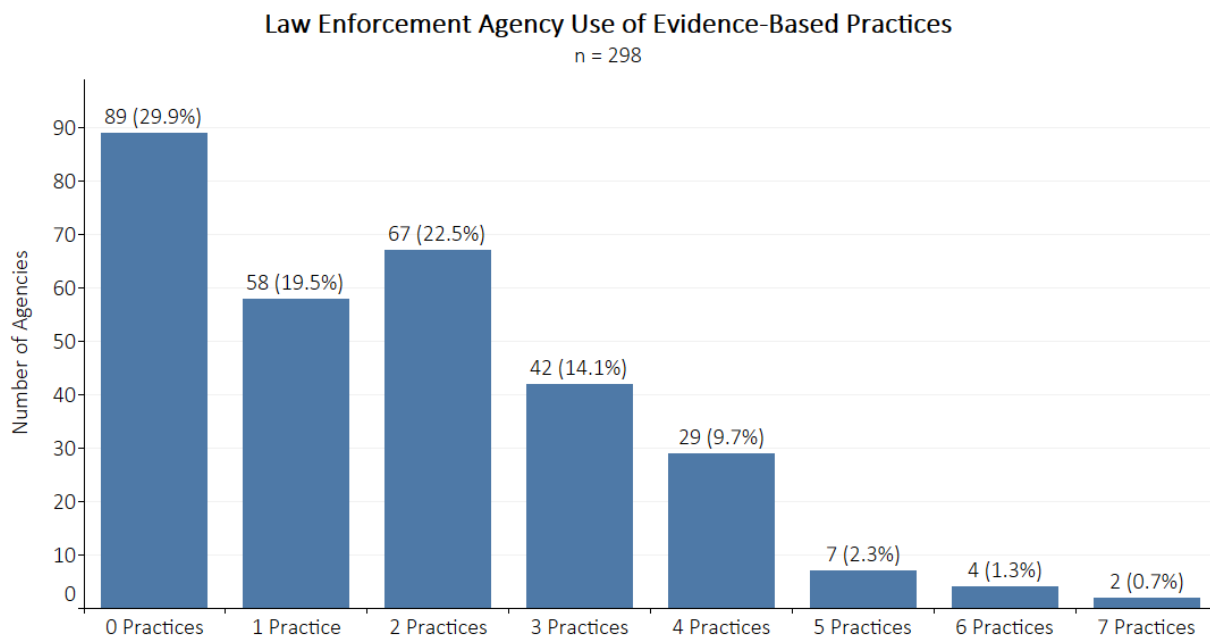


Figure 12: Evidence-based violence reduction activities by type of law enforcement, survey results



Participants could choose all options that applied resulting in a separate, but informative finding that law enforcement across the state of Missouri are not currently employing any of these practices in thirty percent of agencies. (Figure 12b below)

Figure 12b: Evidence-based violence reduction activities by type of law enforcement, survey results



**Focus Group Question 3.** The final question posed to the focus groups asked “what programs or initiatives you currently operate in your region show promising positive impact on reducing violent crime?” This question was designed to facilitate a conversation with regional law enforcement leaders about what is working for them in their regions as well as signal to state leadership the evidence-based and innovative practices already implanted across the state that could be replicated elsewhere. One Poplar Bluff participant’s comment characterizes many of the conversations had on this topic, “The regional approach is the best approach.” From the St. Joseph focus group, it was stated “None of us have everything, but all of us have something.” These comments synthesize both the top three promising practices each region identified and the conversation had about those selections: the most promising approaches shared the concepts of community and collaboration. The law enforcement priorities for community and collaboration varied (see Figure 13 below), but the goals were similar: capitalize on the resources that exist and find a way to sustain them. Problem-solving policing, participation in task forces, and participation in school resource officer programs were the three most frequent types of community policing engaged in statewide.

Figure 13: Promising existing practices and initiatives, focus group results.

QUESTION 3	RANK	LOCATION							
		POPLAR BLUFF	ST. LOUIS	KIRKSVILLE	JEFFERSON CITY	SPRINGFIELD 1	SPRINGFIELD 2	KANSAS CITY	ST. JOSEPH
What programs or initiatives you currently operate in your region show promising positive impact on reducing violent crime?	1	Regional communication and cooperation	Improved data and technology usage	Child Crimes Task Force	Community Engagement Teams	Family Justice Center	Crisis Intervention Team (CIT)	Mental health co-responders	Embedded mental health clinician with law enforcement
	2	Street Crimes Task Force	Relationship with US Attorney	School Resource Officers (SROs)	Relentless pressure to solve cases/ collaboration across agencies (tie)	Virtual mobile crisis intervention	Law enforcement/ mental health partnerships	License Plate Recognition programs	Regional joint operations and coordinated task forces
	3	Major Case Squad	Technology improvement s/ partnership with citizens and private companies (tie)	Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) Council	Human Trafficking Task Force	Mental Health Bay in jails/ Operation Crossfire (tie)	Major Case Squad/Officer wellness (tie)	Crime Reduction Team	Community Mental Health Liaisons (CMHLs)/ victim advocates (tie)

As noted in survey responses, Missouri law enforcement are engaging in evidence-based violent crime reduction strategies as budgets allow. In all of the regional focus groups, the collaboration between federal, state and local agencies was in the top three promising practices mentioned, and in particular, participation in various task forces. Task forces provide interagency collaboration for the sharing of resources or providing specialized training; it promotes greater efficiency in service delivery and minimizes the damage from reduced funding. With the reduction of budgets, staffing crisis, and lack of quality training mentioned by the participants, interagency collaboration is a mechanism used to meet the needs of an agency for identified shortcomings. While supporting the needs of an agency, interagency collaboration also helps in building public trust, allows for better information sharing and supports emergency and situational preparedness.

While discussing promising practices in all focus groups, participants felt engaging youth would assist in helping to build trust with the community. Several agencies viewed their School Resource Officers (SROs) as a valuable tool to assist in the reduction of violent crime. A Southeast Missouri participant stated “SROs help build trust with the community.” Although SROs were not selected in the top three in all focus groups, there was great discussion about the SROs and their benefits in all of the focus group locations. In some rural areas, the SRO was the only tool utilized to engage with the community. Southwest Missouri participants stated “we need to change the mindset of youth and juveniles. Family values are declining. The juvenile system does not allow juvenile officers to handle juvenile issues” and “the issues are generational.” In the Northwest Missouri focus group participants stated “there is no accountability for juveniles” and Missouri needs “early identification of mental health and substance use disorders in youth in schools; need investment in kids.” A St. Louis participant stated we “need to get kids into programs and reach them before age of 14.”

Other programs Missouri law enforcement agencies utilize to engage with youth are DARE, Explorer, Police Athletic Leagues, Students Against Destructive Decisions, Boys and Girls Clubs, Youth Academy, “Shop with a Cop,” Lunch Buddies, Bicycle Programs, and other Youth/Police Initiatives. In a 2018 report by the International Association of Chiefs of Police “Practices in Modern Policing: Police-Youth Engagement” outlines the Task Force on 21<sup>st</sup> Century Policing promising practices for youth engagement. It is exciting to note that activities Missouri law enforcement are participating in with our youth fall within those task force recommendations.

### **Conclusions and Next Steps.**

The law enforcement survey and focus groups found that the challenges, resource barriers, and promising areas for impact are interrelated for Missouri law enforcement, but also that there are clearly delineated areas that, if addressed first and effectively could reduce the barriers to addressing violent crime in the state.

- (1) Challenges facing law enforcement to reducing violent crime
  - a. Lack of victim and/or witness cooperation with investigations and cases, lack of prosecution of violent crime cases, lack of community-based resources for individuals with mental health and/or substance use disorders, and gun violence and the prevalence of guns presented the most significant challenges to law enforcement leaders statewide, and while other challenges were discussed, there was agreement Resources needed to reduce the impact of identified challenges as the most pressing.
- (2) Challenges facing law enforcement to reducing violent crime

- a. There was uniform agreement across Missouri’s law enforcement leaders about the resources needed to effectively address violent crime and the current challenges they face. Resources needed are overwhelmingly related to budgets and staffing.
- (3) Promising existing programs or practices that have a positive impact on reducing violent crime
  - a. First and foremost, Missouri has already made significant progress toward training law enforcement staff and giving them the tools they need to be successful to address individuals in crisis. Time and resources would be well-spent to further this progress.
  - b. Dozens of promising practices were identified through the focus group discussions that serve as a first phase of investigation for state leaders of how to better support what is working and expand it throughout the state.

Information gathered from the statewide focus groups was integrated with the law enforcement survey data to produce this report. The results reported herein could be used to develop a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for the MOLEAP program created in HB 1355. Funding for MOLEAP will support efforts across the state to remove barriers and challenges so that law enforcement can implement evidence-based practices to address violent crime that have been difficult to institute in the past.

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## Appendix A: County Classifications in the State of Missouri, 2019.

Class 1 with Charter (3 counties)	Class 1 non-Charter (15 counties)	Class 2 assessed above \$600M (3 counties)	Class 3 assessed under \$600M (89 counties)			Class 4 (4 counties)
Jackson	Boone	Callaway	Adair	Henry*	Perry	Johnson
Jefferson	Buchanan	Lincoln	Andrew	Hickory	Phelps	Lafayette
St. Charles	Camden	Newton	Atchison	Holt	Polk	Pettis
St. Louis	Cape Girardeau		Audrain	Howard	Pulaski	Saline
	Cass		Barry	Howell	Putnam*	
	Christian		Barton*	Iron	Ralls	
	Clay		Bates*	Knox	Randolph	
	Cole		Benton	Laclede	Ray	
	Franklin		Bollinger	Lawrence	Reynolds	
	Greene		Butler	Lewis	Ripley	
	Jasper		Caldwell*	Linn*	Schuyler	
	Platte		Carroll*	Livingston*	Scotland	
	St. Francois		Carter	Macon	Scott	
	Taney		Cedar	Madison	Shannon	
			Chariton*	Maries	Shelby	
			Clark	Marion	St. Clair	
			Clinton	McDonald	Ste. Genevieve	
			Cooper	Mercer*	Stoddard*	
			Crawford	Miller	Stone	
			Dade*	Mississippi	Sullivan	
			Dallas	Moniteau	Texas*	
			Daviess*	Monroe	Vernon*	
			Dekalb*	Montgomery	Warren	
			Dent	Morgan	Washington	
			Douglas	New Madrid	Wayne	
			Dunklin*	Nodaway*	Webster	
			Gasconade	Oregon	Worth	
			Gentry*	Osage	Wright	
			Grundy*	Ozark		
			Harrison*	Pemiscot		

\* = designation as a township.

## Appendix B: Evidence-Based Violence Reduction Strategy Definitions

***Evidence-based violence reduction approaches.*** Participants were asked to indicate which of the following evidence-based policing (EBP) strategies they currently use to address violent crime at their agencies, and they were provided with the same descriptions for each approach listed below:

<b>Focused deterrence</b>	Through direct outreach to recurring offenders, law enforcement articulates the criminal consequences for criminal action and incentives for compliance before a specific crime.
<b>Hot spots policing geography-focused</b>	Focusing law enforcement resources on small units of where crime has been historically concentrated.
<b>Directed patrols for gun violence</b>	Similar to geographic hot spots policing, but usually in a larger area and focused on gun crime. Law enforcement conduct proactive investigation and enforcement rather than answer calls for service.
<b>Problem-oriented policing</b>	An approach, rather than a specific policy, in which law enforcement identifies specific problems facing their community and develops tailored responses to it rather than reactive or incident-driven activity. Responses may address social problems rather than focus on the crime the problem generates.
<b>Timely use of accurate DNA testing</b>	Expanding the use of timely DNA testing to crimes in which it is less traditionally used, such as property crimes.
<b>Information-gathering interrogations</b>	An approach to interrogations that emphasizes information gathering over confrontation/accusation. Establish rapport and aim to elicit as much information as possible rather than an outright confession.
<b>Law enforcement diversion techniques</b>	Use of alternatives to citation or arrest for certain offenses.